

## REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the previous amendments and the following remarks.

Before turning to the claims, a brief discussion of aspects of a tube clamp device according to disclosed embodiments is provided. As illustrated in Fig. 2, a holding unit has a first holding section 6 and a second holding section 7 disposed along a longitudinal direction of tubes (8, 9) placed at a placement clamp section. As discussed in paragraph [0024] of the specification, the first holding section 6 has a shaft 19 which protrudes from an end face disposed at a side of the second holding section 7. As further discussed in paragraph [0033] of the specification, the second holding section 7 has a long hole 40 formed at a side of the first holding section 6 and into which the shaft is inserted.

Turning now to the claims, Claim 8, the only independent claim, is rejected as being unpatentable over Spencer on view of Babyak.

Claim 8 recites a tube connecting apparatus which connects flexible tubes each other, including a holding unit having a placement clamp section at which a tube is placed, a movable clamp section which is movable in a direction of pressing the tube which is placed at the placement clamp section and in a direction of separating from the tube, and a hook section which is set up at the movable clamp section and which engages the placement clamp section to maintain a pressing state of the movable clamp section against the tube. The apparatus also includes a cutting unit which cuts the tubes held in a flat state by the holding unit, and a movement unit which moves the holding unit to change relatively positions of the tubes cut by the cutting unit such that end portions to be connected face each other.

The holding unit has a plurality of divided hook portions at the hook section in a direction orthogonal to a longitudinal direction of the tube placed at the placement clamp section. At least one of the hook portions is made of an elastic member which maintains engagement with the placement clamp section. The elastic member has a protruded portion at one side which protrudes relative to other hook portions and has an other side fixed to the hook section.

The Official Action correctly notes that Spencer does not disclose a hook section having a plurality of divided hook portions including an elastic member having a protruded portion at one side which protrudes relative to the other hook portions. The Official Action goes on to state that Babyak cures the above-noted deficiencies in Spencer. Though Applicants do not share this view for reasons discussed in the previous response, the amended version of Claim 8 presented here more clearly distinguishes the claimed device at issue here over the disclosures in Spencer and Babyak.

Specifically, amended Claim 8 recites that the holding unit has a first holding section and a second holding section which are disposed along a longitudinal direction of the tubes placed at the placement clamp section, the first holding section has a shaft which protrudes from an end face disposed at a side of the second holding section of the movable clamp section, and the second holding section has a long hole formed at a side of the first holding section of the movable clamp section and into which the shaft is inserted. Spencer clearly does not disclose a shaft or a long hole as recited in combination with the other features recited in amended Claim 8. Babyak does not cure the above-noted deficiencies in Spencer.

Accordingly, Claim 8 is allowable over Spencer in view of Babyak, and withdrawal of the rejection of Claim 8 is respectfully requested.

The dependent claims are allowable at least by virtue of their dependence from allowable independent claims. Thus, a detailed discussion of the additional distinguishing features recited in the dependent claims is not set forth at this time.

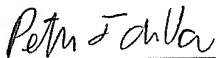
Early and favorable action with respect to this application is respectfully requested.

Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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